

Top Secret



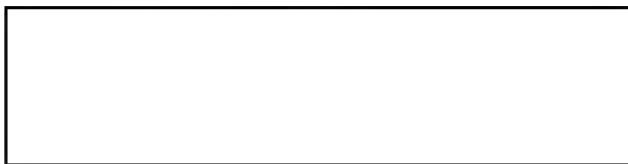
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SOUTH VIETNAM: President Thieu may have added to the growing divisiveness surrounding Vice President Ky's presidential campaign.

Yesterday the government confiscated 15 of Saigon's 30-odd daily newspapers for printing articles containing statements attributed to Ky which were claimed to be "harmful to national security and the fighting spirit of the armed forces."

The statements apparently were made during campaign speeches by Ky to his supporters in Nha Trang and Cholon. [redacted]

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Ky said he would seize power if the coming presidential elections in October were not fair. He also strongly criticized the government's tolerance of nepotism, corruption, and subservience to Americans, and said that if he is elected president he will end the war through negotiations with North Vietnam.

Ky's rhetoric may reflect his confidence that he can meet the necessary requirements for qualifying as a presidential candidate. Under the recently enacted election law, the endorsement of 40 national assemblymen or 100 provincial councilors is required to qualify a candidate for the race. [redacted]

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Duong Van
"Big" Minh said that Ky has been "able to buy" the required provincial council members at a cost Minh claims was between US \$4,000 and \$6,000 each. Minh also acknowledged that he himself now has two more than the needed 40 endorsements from national assemblymen.

Ky's attacks against the government are among his strongest yet. Although his talk of a coup is old hat--and not to be taken seriously at this juncture--Ky's position as vice president adds credibility

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to some of his charges about corrupt government practices. On the other hand, Ky's penchant for flamboyance and the general belief that he, too, has been involved in some questionable actions probably offset the impact of his attacks. Although he currently is not considered a serious threat to Thieu's chances for re-election, Ky's latest statements indicate that he probably will continue to provoke the President into taking actions that will be politically embarrassing for the incumbent administration.

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